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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 003339

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NATO, RU, TU

SUBJECT: TURKEY/RUSSIA: LAVROV VISIT LESS THAN SATISFYING

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

Summary

¶1. (C) Foreign Ministry DDG Murat Burhan and Russian embassy PolCouns Vyacheslav Kunekov provided us read-outs of Foreign Minister Lavrov's May 31-June 1 visit to Ankara and Istanbul.

While the Russians and Turks were in general agreement on regional issues, the Turkish side was disappointed with lack of Russian support on Cyprus, Turkey's 2009-2010 UNSC candidacy, the PKK, and the Samsun-Ceyhan pipeline. End Summary

Wide-ranging agenda

¶2. (C) Russian FM Lavrov met with PM Erdogan, FM Gul, Parliament Speaker Arinc, and President Sezer during his May 29-30 visit to Ankara and Istanbul. Burhan said that Lavrov's restricted format meeting with Gul lasted much longer than expected, covered most outstanding issues, and left little for the full delegations to talk about. Lavrov left Ankara for Istanbul May 31, where he met with the Secretary General of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

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(BSEC). Burhan said Lavrov discussed the range of regional issues with his Turkish hosts, including Iran, Iraq, the Caucasus, Middle East, and Cyprus. Lavrov and Gul also discussed Turkey's EU accession as well as NATO enlargement. Neither side raised the Balkans, Nagorno-Karabakh, or Chechnya. Turkey also brought up PKK terrorism with the Russians.

Iran -- No Automatic Sanctions

¶3. (C) Burhan said that Secretary Rice's call to FM Gul to preview the May 31 U.S. initiative on Iran occurred during the Gul-Lavrov meeting. Lavrov reportedly told the Turks that the Secretary had briefed him earlier on the U.S. move and noted that he was on his way to Vienna to discuss the EU-3 package. Without addressing the U.S. proposal directly, Lavrov told the Turks that Iran must be offered a face-saving formula and that, even if Iran does not accept such a formula, sanctions should not be automatic; the UN Security Council should make the decision. The use of force must be avoided in any case, the Russians insisted.

Iraq - Lavrov Calls for International Conference

¶4. (C) Lavrov told the Turks that Russia saw Iraq elections and installation of the new government as positive. The Russians had believed that some sort of national consensus before the government formation would have been preferable, but realized this could not be achieved. Lavrov repeated an earlier Russian proposal for an international conference on Iraq that would include the P-5, Iraq's neighbors and Iraq.

Middle East

¶5. (C) According the Burhan, Lavrov said that Russia supports Palestinian President Abbas's dual aims of engaging Israel in direct talks and simultaneously forging a consensus among Palestinian factions. Russia is pleased that Abbas has endorsed the Palestinian National Accord. Like Turkey, Russia has encouraged Hamas to enter a dialogue with Abbas. Lavrov informed the Turks that Russia has provided USD 10 million in urgent humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people.

Syria-Lebanon - A Bilateral Issue

¶6. (C) Lavrov and Gul agreed that Syria must comply with all relevant UN Security Council resolutions and cooperate with the Hariri investigation. Russia is in favor of Syria normalizing its relations with Lebanon, opening an Embassy in Beirut and demarcating the border. Lavrov noted, however, that Syria-Lebanon relations are a bilateral matter that should not be subject to UNSC decisions.

Armenia -- Russia Can Help

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¶7. (C) Burhan and Kunekov said that Turkey asked for Russian support with Armenia, noting Turkey's proposal of a Joint Historical Commission. Both reported that Lavrov agreed with the Turkish position that history should be left to historians and that he undertook to encourage Armenia to be more flexible.

Strengthening Black Sea Institutions

¶8. (C) Gul explained Turkish views on Black Sea security, focusing on making existing instruments and mechanisms, such as BSEC, BLACKSEAFOR, and Operation Black Sea Harmony (OBSH), more efficient. Lavrov attributed to bureaucratic obstacles Russia's delay in responding to Turkey's invitation to participate in OBSH, but suggested Russia could announce its intent to join before President Sezer's visit to Moscow in late June. Turkish and Russian officials also discussed coordinating efforts to revitalize BSEC during the respective Russian (May-Oct 2006) and Turkish (May-Oct 2007) BSEC presidencies.

No Satisfaction on Cyprus

¶9. (C) Turkish officials asked Lavrov for Russian political support on Cyprus and concrete measures to ease Turkish Cypriot isolation. They noted that, during Sezer's December 2004 visit to Moscow, President Putin had spoken of the need to redress the Turkish Cypriots' unfair situation. They asked specifically for Russian endorsement of Gul's January action plan, which proposes opening all ports simultaneously. Burhan stated that the Russian response was disappointing. Russia would only approve of initiatives agreed to by both sides and the Greek Cypriot side had rejected Gul's proposal. He noted that a Russian trade delegation had visited

northern Cyprus, but Burhan said this had been hardly satisfactory as the delegation had landed in the Republic of Cyprus before going to the north. The Turkish side saw as positive, however, Lavrov's emphasis on the UNSYG's Good Offices Mission as the primary vehicle for a final settlement.

Turkey/EU -- Russian Visa Concerns

¶10. (C) Burhan said the Russian delegation expressed concerns about the effect of Turkey's EU accession negotiations and asked the Turks to ensure their EU-conforming legislation does not prejudice bilateral relations. The Russian concern focused on EU visa requirements and the potential effect on Russian tourism in Turkey. The Turks resisted Russian calls for regular consultations on this issue, calling them premature.

Russian Fears of NATO Enlargement

¶11. (C) Lavrov expressed Russian concerns over potential NATO expansion to Ukraine and Georgia, as well as new NATO bases in Romania and Bulgaria. At the same time, however, he appeared satisfied with the operation of the NATO Russia Council but said Russia desired to tackle more concrete issues in that forum.

No Russian Commitment to Turkey's UNSC Candidacy

¶12. (C) Burhan reported that Gul had asked Lavrov for Russian support for Turkey's candidacy for a 2009-2010 UNSC seat. Lavrov refused to commit, arguing that P-5 members had an agreement that none would publicly announce their support for a particular candidate before the voting process begins.

Russian Listing of PKK Sought

¶13. (C) Burhan said Turkish officials had renewed a previous request to the Russians to officially declare the PKK a terrorist organization. Lavrov expressed sympathy but offered nothing concrete, citing domestic legal obstacles.

Economic Cooperation and Energy

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¶14. (C) Burhan reported that bilateral economic issues did not feature on the agenda as many had been covered during a May meeting of the Turkey-Russia Joint Economic Commission in Istanbul. In that forum, Turkey's complaints about its USD 10 billion trade deficit with Russia were met by Russian insistence that this deficit is compensated for by a huge, unofficial "suitcase trade" from Turkey to Russia, large Turkish investments in Russia, and the annual sojourn of some two million Russian tourists in Turkey. Turkey complained that Russian customs officials used artificially high reference prices for Turkish exports to Russia, while Russian officials replied that Turkish exporters deliberately undervalued their products.

¶15. (C) Both Burhan and Kunev reported that Russian companies, including Gazprom, are seeking to invest in the Turkish energy sector, including the construction of distribution networks and storage facilities for natural gas. Discussions are ongoing between Gazprom and BOTAS. Turkey had solicited Russian interest in the Samsun-Ceyhan pipeline. Burhan and Kunev said the Russian side was still studying the Turkish plan. Burhan also mentioned that, at the inauguration of the Blue Stream terminal in 2005, Putin had raised the export of Russian natural gas to third countries, but the Turks had heard nothing further from the Russians.

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